



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Massachusetts State Office

451 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002
413-253-4350, fax 413-253-4375
www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Diane Baedeker Petit
Public Affairs Officer
413-253-4371
Diane.Petit@ma.usda.gov

USDA announces accelerated sign-up for farm conservation program in Massachusetts

AMHERST, MA (September 19, 2007) — Massachusetts farmers who would like technical and financial assistance in managing their natural resources are encouraged to apply now for the federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been authorized to conduct an accelerated sign-up period for EQIP while work on the next federal Farm Bill continues.

Applications must be received by Tuesday, November 13, 2007. Farmers should call or visit their local USDA Service Center as soon as possible to begin the conservation planning process and complete the necessary paperwork.

USDA service center locations are listed on-line at <http://offices.usda.gov> or in the phone book under Federal Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture. General program information is available on the NRCS Massachusetts website at www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

EQIP helps farmers improve production while protecting environmental quality by addressing such concerns as soil quality, grazing land conservation, irrigation efficiency and comprehensive nutrient management. With financial and technical assistance from NRCS, farmers will promote environmental quality on farmland, address water quality and quantity challenges, and protect valuable fish and wildlife habitat.

"USDA is committed to providing conservation tools and resources to help Massachusetts farmers ensure that their land remains healthy and productive," said State Conservationist Christine S. Clarke. "NRCS field staff are available to help farmers develop a conservation plan to address their resource concerns."

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In fiscal year 2006, NRCS funded 113 EQIP contracts with Massachusetts farmers to implement \$3.86 million in conservation practices on 7,894 acres of land.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. NRCS has seven Massachusetts field offices in Greenfield, Hadley, Holden, Hyannis, Pittsfield, Westford, and West Wareham, which work with local conservation districts and other partners to serve farmers and landowners throughout the commonwealth.

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NOTE TO EDITORS AND REPORTERS:

If you would like to include local contact information for your readers, please cite the office below that serves your area. If you have any questions, please call the public affairs contact above or your local office below. For additional news releases, background information and other story ideas, visit <http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov/news>.

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